

**2023-
2024**

**Salt Lake City Clinical Psychology
Postdoctoral Fellowship:
PTSD Track**

George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans
Affairs Medical Center

SALT LAKE CITY CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: PTSD TRACK



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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Letter from Postdoctoral Fellowship Co-Director | 5 |
| Accreditation Status | 6 |
| George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System | 7 |
| Mental Health Service | 8 |
| Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship | 8 |
| Training Philosophy | 8 |
| Fellowship Goal and Objectives | 9 |
| Fellowship Goal | 9 |
| Training Objectives | 9 |
| 1. Assessment | 9 |
| 2. Intervention | 9 |
| 3. Supervision and Consultation | 9 |
| 4. Scholarly Inquiry | 10 |
| 5. Administrative Abilities | 10 |
| 6. Individual and Cultural Diversity | 10 |
| 7. Professionalism | 10 |
| Fellowship Training Experiences | 10 |
| PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) | 10 |
| Roles/responsibilities: | 11 |
| Polytrauma Team | 11 |
| Roles/responsibilities: | 12 |
| Postdoctoral Fellow Didactics | 12 |
| Polytrauma Team Didactic Series | 12 |
| Evidence-Based Treatment Didactic Series | 12 |
| Psychology Seminar Series | 13 |
| Professional Development | 13 |
| Postdoctoral Fellowship Project | 13 |
| Psychology Intern Presentation Series | 14 |
| Research | 14 |
| Leadership | 14 |
| Outreach Opportunities | 14 |
| Competency Evaluation | 15 |
| Fellow Resources | 15 |
| <i>This document may contain links to sites external to Department of Veterans Affairs.</i> | |
| <i>VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the external linked websites.</i> | |

| | |
|---|----|
| Fellow Training Year | 16 |
| Stipend and Benefits | 17 |
| Eligibility Requirements | 17 |
| Dates to Remember | 18 |
| Application Checklist | 18 |
| Application Evaluation..... | 19 |
| Commitment to Diversity | 20 |
| Administrative Policies and Procedures..... | 20 |
| Due Process: | 21 |
| Privacy policy: | 21 |
| Self-Disclosure: | 21 |
| Equal Opportunity Employer: | 21 |
| About Salt Lake City and Utah | 21 |
| Training Staff..... | 23 |
| Parting Words..... | 26 |

LETTER FROM POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP CO-DIRECTOR

Dear Prospective Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship, PTSD Track, at the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS). We, the training faculty, know you have choices and are delighted you would consider our site among your options. Postdoctoral training is an exhilarating step on one's path to becoming an early career psychologist, and we are very excited to be a part of this process. Put simply, we love training postdocs! This brochure should provide you with a good understanding of the experiences offered in our program, and specifically in the PTSD Track. In addition to describing the clinical rotations, training requirements, and application procedures, these materials describe the overall goals and philosophy of our program and will hopefully give you a sense of what it's like to train with us here at VASLCHCS. Fostering diversity and inclusion is important to us, and prospective applicants from diverse backgrounds and historically underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.

The VASLCHCS has a long history of clinical psychology training across a variety of training levels. The Psychology Predoctoral Internship has been in operation since 1952 and has been continuously APA-accredited since 1979; we currently offer 8 internship positions. The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship has been operating since 2007, when the Salt Lake City VA was awarded two clinical psychology postdoctoral positions to focus on PTSD, polytrauma, and readjustment after deployment, with a particular emphasis on working with Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans. In 2013, the Fellowship expanded with three more positions: 2 in Health Psychology and Geropsychology and 1 in Addictions Treatment. We also typically have over a dozen psychology practicum students training throughout Psychology Service during the year.

At all these levels of training, our mission is to train and mentor the next generation of professional psychologists, who are called to help improve the lives of others and to foster a better society. These are challenging and rewarding tasks for which proper training is critical. For the PTSD Track, given that nearly every VAMC in the nation has a PTSD specialty team employing psychologists, and given the ubiquity of trauma, we feel an extra responsibility in preparing future psychologists to work with Veterans struggling with the complex sequelae of trauma exposure. All of us had teachers and mentors and supervisors who understood this responsibility and who took the time to guide and shape and nurture our growth in these domains. We train to continue this service. We train because it matters to us and to the Veterans we serve.

I hope this brochure reflects our enthusiasm for training, with professional development of fellows being our highest priority. That said, it is difficult to fully communicate the "feel" of the training program in a brochure so please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions. I wish you the very best during this exciting time in your training.

Sincerely,
Cicely C. Taravella, PhD (she/her/hers)
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ACCREDITATION STATUS

The clinical psychology postdoctoral fellowship at the VASLCHCS is accredited by the American Psychological Association through 2028. For information regarding APA accreditation of this or other accredited training programs, please contact:

Commission on Accreditation (CoA)
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
Phone: (202) 336-5979
FAX: (202) 336-5978

GEORGE E. WAHLEN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship is sponsored by the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) located in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The main facility is located on an 81-acre campus adjacent to the Salt Lake City Veterans Affairs Regional Office and the University of Utah. It is a mid-sized, primary and tertiary care facility with 121 beds providing a full range of patient care services.

Comprehensive health care is provided through medicine, surgery, mental health, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology, oncology, dentistry, geriatrics, and extended care.

The VASLCHCS is part of VA Network (VISN) 19, which encompasses the largest geographic area in the 48 contiguous states. We serve an area covering the entire state of Utah, the majority of Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, and portions of Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, and Oklahoma. We have eleven Community Clinics (CBOCs) and two Outreach Clinics in remote areas of Utah, Idaho, and Nevada.



In terms of demographics, 86% of the veterans served by VASLCHCS identify as male; 14% identify as female. Eighty-seven percent identify as Euro-American, 6.5% as Latino/Latina, 5% as African-American, 1% as Native American, and 0.5% as Asian American. The socioeconomic status of our veterans varies widely. A vibrant LGBTQ community is served by our VA. We would like to respectfully acknowledge that the VASLCHCS sits on lands that have always been indigenous lands, and that Utah is currently home to five Native American tribes: the Ute, Shoshone, Paiute, Navajo, and Goshute.

VASLCHCS has a major affiliation with the University of Utah School of Medicine. Over 500 University of Utah residents, interns, and students are trained at the VASLCHCS each year. Additional Special Fellowship programs affiliated with the University of Utah are ongoing in Ambulatory Care and Medical Informatics Training Programs. Currently there are 115 physician resident positions funded at the VASLCHCS.

There are also nursing student affiliations with numerous colleges and universities throughout the United States, including local Intermountain West affiliations with the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, and Westminster College. The VASLCHCS has ongoing training programs and affiliations with numerous colleges and universities throughout the United States involving our Associated Health Training Program. This associated health training includes dentistry, pharmacy, social work, psychology, occupational and physical rehabilitation, audiology, physician assistant, dietetics, and

podiatry training programs. Many of these training programs have been integrated into our Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC).

In 2006, VASLCHCS was designated a Level III Polytrauma Center to respond to the needs of Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts who have experienced multiple traumatic injuries, including TBI and PTSD.

Further information about the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is available at <http://www.saltlakecity.va.gov>.



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

Although officially designated a General Medical and Surgical facility, the VASLCHCS also provides mental health treatment through a variety of inpatient, residential, and outpatient services and programs. The various programs of the Mental Health Services provide comprehensive mental health care by a multidisciplinary staff including psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, advanced practice nurses, RN case managers, vocational specialists, addiction therapists, and mental health associates. There are on average around 600 admissions per year to the Inpatient Psychiatry Unit. More than 20,000 unique patients per year are seen on an outpatient or consultation basis by Mental Health Services personnel, resulting in, on average, over 120,000 patient contacts per year.

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship is a full-time, 12-month continuous appointment. Fellows typically work 40 hours per week and complete a total of 2080 hours of training. The usual tour of duty is 8:00 – 4:30PM, although some training experiences may involve a different one (e.g., 12:00PM – 8:30PM) due to scheduled activities on that rotation (e.g., evening therapy groups, weekend post-deployment health assessments, etc.). The parameters of each rotation are explained during the first week of orientation.

TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

The Postdoctoral Fellowship ascribes to the practitioner-scholar model of training. As such, the goal of the program is to train psychologists to function in an informed, competent, independent, and ethical manner across a wide range of health care settings and with diverse populations. The program's structure allows for both breadth and depth of clinical experiences, as well as exposure to a variety of intervention approaches and professional development opportunities. Fellows are here for training and

professional development, not service delivery; consequently, didactics, training seminars, and any other educational activities take priority in a fellow's schedule.

FELLOWSHIP GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

This clinical psychology postdoctoral fellowship provides advanced interdisciplinary education and training across a variety of settings in outpatient mental health for the purpose of training future psychologists who are capable of providing the next generation of psychological services within Veterans Affairs. Even though this is classified as a general fellowship training, this track of the program emphasizes honing skills in the assessment and treatment of **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**, **Polytrauma** associated with **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**, and **readjustment problems** in diverse Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Veterans. Fellows gain expertise in assessing and treating the sequelae of an array of traumatic experiences (e.g., PTSD related to combat trauma, military sexual trauma, and other military-related trauma, along with the co-occurring effects of civilian and childhood trauma) as well as commonly co-occurring difficulties associated with PTSD including substance abuse, couple/family distress, sequelae of discrimination/harassment, employment/educational difficulties, and polytrauma.

FELLOWSHIP GOAL

The fellowship is guided by an overarching goal:

To train clinical psychology postdoctoral fellows to be future psychologists who are especially equipped to work within Veteran's Affairs Medical Centers in clinical and leadership roles. Training focuses on working with diverse veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder, polytrauma histories, and readjustment strains post-deployment.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Within this goal, there are several training objectives:

1. ASSESSMENT

Fellows understand, select, implement, interpret, and integrate effective methods of assessment in Veterans accessing mental and medical care services through the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System.

2. INTERVENTION

Fellows implement effective psychological interventions in group and individual formats for Veterans with PTSD, readjustment, and polytrauma histories within the framework of interdisciplinary team involvement.

3. SUPERVISION AND CONSULTATION

Fellows develop and deepen their skills in receiving and giving supervision and consultation. This is demonstrated by understanding and delivery of effective supervision and providing consultative services as needed.

4. SCHOLARLY INQUIRY

Fellows demonstrate an ability to access and understand research with an emphasis on integrating science and practice for Veterans with PTSD, readjustment, and polytrauma histories. Fellows also share their knowledge by conducting professional presentations for psychologists, lay audiences, and other members of the healthcare community.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITIES

Fellows demonstrate understanding of the organization and mission of psychology within Veterans Affairs. They further exhibit organization, management, and administration skills pertinent to psychological service delivery, training, and research.

6. INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Fellows demonstrate awareness, sensitivity, and skills in working professionally with diverse individuals, groups, and communities who represent various cultural and personal backgrounds and characteristics defined broadly and consistent with APA policy.

7. PROFESSIONALISM

Fellows demonstrate awareness of their identity as developing psychologists to include professional deportment, self-reflection, integrity, accountability, and adherence to professional conduct, ethics, and law, and other standards for providers of psychological services.

FELLOWSHIP TRAINING EXPERIENCES

Postdoctoral fellows are active members of two interdisciplinary treatment teams during the training year:

1. The **PTSD Clinical Team** through Outpatient Mental Health Service
2. The **Polytrauma Team** through the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department

Fellows also may have opportunities to provide community outreach to returning veterans from Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom; OEF) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom; OIF and Operation New Dawn; OND). Especially relevant to the VA Mental Health Strategic Plan, psychological services are provided within the complementary areas of emotional trauma (e.g., military combat, military sexual trauma), physical trauma (e.g., TBI, orthopedic injuries), substance abuse, and couples/family discord, primarily within the OEF/OIF/OND veteran population.

PTSD CLINICAL TEAM (PCT)

As a member of our large and enthusiastic PTSD Clinical Team, you will provide assessment and treatment to Veterans from diverse backgrounds with military-related PTSD. Sources of PTSD are often combat-related, but frequently also include military sexual trauma or other traumatic events occurring during military service. Goals for trainees at the completion of their postdoctoral fellowship are to have developed competency and expertise in the assessment of military-related PTSD, to become familiar

with dynamics of PTSD and frequently co-occurring conditions, and to have developed competency and expertise in providing evidence-based treatments for PTSD in individual and group settings.

Fellows gain expertise in diagnostic interviewing and administering the *Clinician Administered PTSD-Scale (CAPS)* to assess for PTSD and other comorbid disorders. They will learn and deliver evidence-based psychotherapy for PTSD, including *Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)* and *Prolonged Exposure (PE)*, with sensitivity to Veterans' individual needs and preferences. There are opportunities to learn and deliver additional evidenced-based psychotherapies for co-occurring disorders (e.g., *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for depression, Dialectical Behavior Therapy*), as well as opportunities for providing PTSD process/integration treatments, including process-oriented psychotherapy, brief manualized treatment (e.g., *Written Exposure Therapy*), Warrior Renew for MST, and psychoeducational interventions.

As we do, we hope you'll find that our PCT is incredibly collegial and supportive, and is committed to the mission of facilitating Veterans' recovery from PTSD. Our fellows become important members of the team, and their contributions are often evident long after fellowship ends.

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. **Assessment:** Fellows conduct 2-3 assessments through consults and/or via the PTSD Open Intake Clinic (when in operation) every week. Fellows also have an opportunity to move on to secondary level assessments, if indicated subsequent to initial intake results.
2. **Individual Psychotherapy:** Fellows carry a caseload of 4-6 veterans participating PE or CPT.
3. **Group Psychotherapy:** Each fellow will be involved several therapy groups over the training year.
4. **Community Outreach:** Fellows will work closely with other members of the PCT by offering services to returning military personnel, sharing resources with the local community, and providing specific education/training about PTSD.
5. **PTSD Clinical Team Meeting:** Fellows attend this weekly team meeting.
6. **Supervision/Training:** Fellows receive a weekly minimum of one hour of individual supervision from the PCT faculty, along with formal learning activities, and group supervision/consultation regarding EBTs.

POLYTRAUMA TEAM

The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is a Level III Polytrauma Support Clinic Site that provides outpatient assessment and treatment services to returning OEF/OIF/OND service members and Veterans with Polytrauma and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Fellows are members of a dynamic Polytrauma treatment team. This interdisciplinary rehabilitation team includes members from Medicine, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Pathology, Social Work, and Psychology. The team works together to evaluate and treat Veterans with complicated physical and psychological presentations. Fellows assist in evaluating and treating OIF/OEF/OND veterans with possible brain injury and other co-morbid physical injuries and psychological concerns and in providing consultation to the other professional disciplines.

Fellows also gain understanding and knowledge about TBI and the associated physical, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional sequelae through individualized training and supervision. These experiences aim to expose you to Veterans with challenging neuropsychiatric presentations in a variety of evaluative and therapeutic settings.

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Polytrauma Clinic: Fellows participate in this interdisciplinary rehabilitation clinic, held on a weekly basis.
2. Individual and Group Psychotherapy: Fellows are provided the opportunity to work with Veterans with polytrauma issues.
3. Colleague Education: Fellows help educate other mental health providers about mild traumatic brain injury.
4. Community Outreach: Fellows work closely with other members of the Polytrauma team by offering services to returning military personnel, sharing resources with the local community, and providing specific education/training about Polytrauma and mTBI. These experiences may include participating in social gatherings for patients and their families, speaking at local conferences, providing formal education to community members.
5. Community Consultation: Fellows may be consulting with employers and academic institutions to set up appropriate accommodations to facilitate best possible functioning for Veterans.

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW DIDACTICS

Several hours each month are designated for attendance at required didactic activities. Because your training is our priority, attendance and participation in these activities takes precedence over service delivery activities or other meetings. Formal didactics typically occur on Wednesday and Thursday mornings and currently include a monthly national diversity VTEL series (covering an array of timely and important diversity topics), a monthly supervision training series, and didactics on PTSD-specific and co-occurring concerns. Fellows and fellowship staff collaborate on many of the potential topics for these latter didactics, based on the fellows' needs/preferences.

POLYTRAUMA TEAM DIDACTIC SERIES

Fellows are provided with a formal overview of the Polytrauma System of Care and services available at our VA. These are discussions and training about the Veteran patient population with respect with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other polytrauma injuries. There is also detailed training on diagnosis and expected recovery following mild TBI (mTBI). Supervisors will also review the role that Rehabilitation Psychology and Neuropsychology has had with regard to adjustment and recovery from brain injury. Finally, this training exposes fellows to the most recent research on OEF/OIF/OND Veterans with TBI.

EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT DIDACTIC SERIES

In 2001, the *New Freedom Commission on Mental Health* study indicated that the nationwide system of delivering mental health services needed to be "transformed." One of the recommendations from the commission was facilitating "knowledge about evidence-based practices (the range of treatments and services of well-documented effectiveness), as well as emerging best practices (treatments and services with a promising but less thoroughly documented evidentiary base)." In response, the VA developed a

strategic plan for transforming mental health care that lead to the *Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook* (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2008) and several initiatives to train clinicians in Evidence-Based Psychotherapies. Current initiatives include:

- Prolonged Exposure (PE) for PTSD
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for depression

Early in the training year, fellows receive formal training in PE and CPT. Over the course of the training year, fellows participate in ongoing training, individual supervision, and group consultation in one or more of these EBTs.

PSYCHOLOGY SEMINAR SERIES

This seminar series is designed for the predoctoral interns at the Salt Lake VA and is conducted by psychology staff members, other disciplines from the medical center, and community professionals. Fellows are welcome to attend these as their training interests develop.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Fellows develop presentation and teaching skills by preparing and delivering seminars to predoctoral Psychology Interns. Fellows will prepare and deliver at least one independent seminar for the ***Psychology Seminar Series***. Fellows are encouraged to review the topics that have been presented in the past and to offer training that will contribute meaningfully to the series. For example, fellows may wish to share expertise about a clinical topic, offer training that addresses "gaps" in the current schedule, and/or ask our current interns for topic suggestions. Seminars on diversity and inclusion topics are highly encouraged. Feel free to consult with Dr. Taravella, Dr. Cochran, and/or Dr. Sweeney for specific suggestions. These presentations are typically scheduled for the spring or summer of the training year.

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROJECT

Over the course of your training year, fellows develop and conduct a yearlong Postdoctoral Fellowship Project. This project should exemplify the use of the Practitioner-Scholar model of psychology and be based on a clinical topic about which you are interested in learning more. Please select a specific supervisor-mentor for the project and ensure that the project meets the following goals/objectives:

- Is based on research
- Increases your knowledge and expertise in a topic of interest
- Advances the understanding of the needs/problems facing Veterans
- Contributes to the knowledge-base and/or improves clinical practice in the PTSD Clinical Team and/or Polytrauma Team
- Provides you with a foundation and/or skill set that will increase your opportunities for VA employment

Fellows are responsible for delivering a formal presentation of this project to the Psychology Staff, fellows, and psychology interns. Written evaluations of the presentation are based on Professional Competency development, as well as the above goals/objectives, and will be completed by the audience following the presentation. Evaluations will be given to Dr. Taravella, who will discuss feedback with the fellow; copies of all evaluations will also be included in the fellow's training file.

Fellows should be considering topics for the fellowship project early in the training year and have a solid idea of their project within three months after starting the fellowship. Here, too, diversity and inclusion topics are highly encouraged.

PSYCHOLOGY INTERN PRESENTATION SERIES

Over the course of the training year, predoctoral interns each conduct a formal presentation, focused on a clinical topic of interest. Fellows are required to attend this series as professional colleagues.

RESEARCH

Some fellows are interested in conducting additional research during the course of the postdoctoral year. Although the primary focus of our training program is the development of applied skills, fellows may have the opportunity to participate in ongoing clinical research activities and to develop their own research interests, including via their postdoctoral fellowship project. Dr. Erika Roberge is the contact for the PCT Research Group and can help with questions about current research projects happening within the PTSD Clinical Team.

LEADERSHIP

Fellows have various opportunities to gain leadership and administrative experience. There are a variety of ways that fellows can be involved in these kind of experiences throughout the year. Some of the ways that fellows have participated in the past have included:

- Attending and participating in mental health supervisor's meetings
- Participating in quarterly OEF/OIF/OND stakeholder meetings
- Delivering presentations to community organizations (i.e., schools, military organizations, local conferences)
- Playing a role in Utah State legislative projects for Veterans and their families
- Participating in the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for law enforcement officers regarding the nature of PTSD and how to react to a person who may be displaying PTSD symptoms
- Offering treatment to Veterans in offsite locations, such as Camp Williams (home to the Utah National Guard), Hill Air Force Base, and/or Salt Lake Community College

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

In the Utah valley, there are bases for the Utah National Guard, Army Reserves, Marine Reserves, Navy Reserves, and the Air Force. The goal of OEF/OIF/OND outreach is to establish a good relationship with all of these branches. By far, the largest branch is the Utah National Guard. The PTSD Clinic works closely with them and regularly provides psychoeducational presentations, assessments, consultations, and

direct clinical contact. This relationship is valuable for reaching Veterans who are having difficulties but are unsure of the resources available to them. One component of interaction is in conducting Post-Deployment Health Re-Assessments (PDHRA) over the Salt Lake City VA's large geographical catchment area. VA clinicians often have multiple opportunities to interact one-on-one with service members in a "check-in" style of interaction during official National Guard trainings and activities. This allows Guard members to become familiar with VA staff and make them more approachable if needed in the future.

Fellows also provide community outreach programming outside of the VHASLC campus to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND) veterans who have not yet accessed resources available to them at the VA. This is accomplished through a variety of services including presentation to active duty service members, participation in community activities as a VA representative, and other events.

COMPETENCY EVALUATION

Evaluation is an ongoing, continuous, and reciprocal process. The Postdoctoral Training Committee encourages and supports open and thorough communication between supervisors and fellows regarding training needs, objectives, and competencies. In addition, scheduled, formal evaluation processes occur throughout the postdoctoral year.

Evaluation forms used throughout the training year:

- Professional Competency Assessment of Fellows: Completed by supervisors at the end of each quarter
- Fellow Self Evaluation: Completed by fellows at the start of fellowship, at the end of the second quarter and at the end of the fourth quarter
- Fellowship Presentation Evaluation: After all presentations
- Fellow Evaluation of Training Site: Completed the end of the second quarter and near the end of the fourth quarter
- Fellow Evaluation of Training Supervisors: Completed by fellows at the end of each quarter

FELLOW RESOURCES

Fellows have private offices for use in assessment and psychotherapy. Fellows have access to computers with a Microsoft Office Suite, printer access, and a nationwide integrated electronic medical chart, CPRS. There is also computer support through IRMS. There are several group therapy rooms available for fellows to reserve if needed. While training in the Polytrauma Clinic, fellows have access to workstations with computer and network access. Fellows have access to neuropsychological testing materials. The VA Salt Lake City has a medical library that provides a wide range of psychology, psychiatry, gerontologic, and other journals consistent with the needs of staff and the training program. Fellows have access to the VA library and may access the libraries at the University of Utah by either personal access or inter-library loan.

Fellows receive administrative support from administrative support assistants who help fellows with several aspects of the fellowship.

Should telework be necessary due to continued global health concerns, training staff will work to ensure fellows have the equipment and materials they need to effectively work from home and to provide services via video telehealth.

FELLOW TRAINING YEAR

The fellowship typically begins in late August or early September, with a full orientation from VA Human Resources and Mental Health Service, and the fellowship ends after one full year of training at full time.

Fellows typically devote a minimum eight hours per day, 40 hours per week, to the training program. The usual tour of duty is 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., although some experiences may require evening work with a shifted tour of 11:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Some weekend work is a part of the outreach activities.

The completion of clinical duties may require working extra hours at times (e.g., documenting notes following crisis intervention). The parameters of each training experience are detailed the first week of orientation. Our aim at completion of the fellowship is for fellows to have accrued enough training hours for licensure in any state they may pursue and for board certification should they chose to pursue that in the future. Completing at least 2000 postdoctoral training hours with at least 500 hours in direct clinical care during fellowship meets the postdoctoral hours requirements for board certification and for many, but not all, states. We provide ample opportunity to meet these hour requirements and strongly recommend that fellows reach these benchmarks by the end of the training year. However, licensure requirements vary widely by state. Fellows are responsible for tracking their hours and for learning and meeting the licensure requirements in the state(s) in which they intend to apply for licensure.

Of Note for the 2023-2024 Training Year:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous personal and professional challenges for us all. One of these is challenges is uncertainty about how things will be next week, next month, and especially one year from now.

The Salt Lake City psychology training program has prided itself on its transparency providing detailed and accurate information about our program and training opportunities. With COVID, transparency means we cannot definitively predict how specific rotations and adjunctive training opportunities may evolve for the 2023-2024 training year.

With confidence we can say that there will likely continue to be more utilization of telehealth and technology-based delivery platforms. We do not expect there to be any significant changes to the base clinical services or populations served through the primary and adjunctive experiences described in our materials. For example, the core PCT and Polytrauma experiences have been able to continue throughout the pandemic for staff/trainees with the addition of video telehealth technology. At the time

of this writing, staff and trainees are providing services both in person and via video telehealth, based on Veteran preference. The hospital follows CDC guidance on masking, and masks are currently required in campus buildings where patient care is provided.

The situation continues to evolve, with guidance changing frequently. However, we want to assure you, that even through these challenging times, our dedication to high-quality clinical care, psychology training, and our dedication to the trainees themselves has never been stronger. These will always be cornerstone elements of the VA Salt Lake City psychology training program. This we can predict.

We will update our public materials as we know more about how things will be for the 2023-2024 training year. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

STIPEND AND BENEFITS

Fellows receive a stipend of \$46,334.00 paid in equal installments over 26 bi-weekly pay periods. Fellows are not covered by civil service retirement, but are eligible for federal employee group life insurance and health benefits.

Over the course of the year, fellows earn approximately 13 vacation days and 13 sick days, in addition to federal holidays.

Fellows who work 40 hours per week can fulfill their commitment to the site and still have time for vacations and sick leave. Fellows should track their total training and clinical hours to ensure they are meeting licensure requirements in their chosen state and meeting the recommended number of hours for fellowship (i.e., 2000 total training hours including 500 hours of direct clinical care).

Postdoctoral fellows at the VASLCHCS are appointed in the VA as temporary employees. As such, they are expected to comply with all medical center policies pertaining to employee behavior, including leave.

Fellows may also apply for limited hourly credit for attendance at national and regional professional meetings and workshops through their primary supervisor and Postdoctoral Training Committee. The VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System's policy on Authorized Leave is consistent with the national standard. You are welcome to discuss this with the Director of Training.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements for the postdoctoral training program:

1. Completion of doctoral degree, including defense of dissertation, from an APA-, CPA-, or PC-SAS-accredited Clinical or Counseling, or Combined Psychology doctoral program before the fellowship start date.*
2. Completion of an APA-accredited psychology internship program before the fellowship start date.*

3. U.S. citizenship: applicants must be U.S. citizens; please see eligibility qualifications for psychology training within the Department of Veterans Affairs, which are described at: [Resources for Health Professions Trainees Coming to VA | Eligibility and Forms - Office of Academic Affiliations](#)
4. Selective Service Registration: the Federal Government requires that male applicants to VA positions who were born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for Selective Service between the ages of 18 and 25, and they must sign a Pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. It is not necessary to submit this form with the application, but if you are selected for this training experience and fit the above criteria, you will have to sign it.

Those not meeting the eligibility requirements will be notified as soon as possible.

In addition, fellows are considered temporary federal employees and, therefore, must meet all federal employee requirements, including passing a federally-mandated background check and health status verification (including up-to-date vaccinations for healthcare workers; [Am I Eligible? Checklist for VA HPTs](#)). The VA conducts drug-screening exams randomly on selected personnel as well as new employees. Trainees are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but once on-site they are subject to random drug screening selection in the same manner as other staff. Please see [VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#) for details. Please note that marijuana remains illegal at the federal level and is among the substances included in drug testing, regardless of any state marijuana laws. Official hiring is contingent on meeting these federal requirements.

Failure to meet the above qualifications or failure to pass a federally-mandated background check for employment prior to the fellowship start date could nullify an offer to a candidate.

*If you have not yet completed your internship and degree by the time of the application, the Training Directors of both your doctoral programs and internship must verify that you are expected to complete these requirements prior to the start of the postdoctoral fellowship. Applicants must provide verification of a degree prior to an agreed upon postdoctoral training start date. In unique situations, extensions may be applied as deemed appropriately by the training committee.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Application materials due: December 15, 5 pm (Eastern Time)
- Interviews of candidates: Mid to late-January

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Submit the APPIC APPA CAS Online application no later than 5pm on the application due date listed above.

Please use the following web address to access the application website:

<https://appicpostdoc.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>

All application materials must be received by the due date listed above. Please submit the following with your application:

1. Letter of interest including the following elements:
 - A description of your educational, clinical, and research experiences relevant to this fellowship
 - A statement of your training and career goals and how this fellowship may meet those goals
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Graduate transcripts
4. Three letters of recommendation including:
 - At least one from a faculty member personally familiar with your graduate school performance
 - At least one from a primary clinical supervisor during your pre-doctoral internship
5. A brief statement regarding the **status of your dissertation or research project and expected graduation date** from your graduate school program (either from your **graduate training director or dissertation chair**; this statement can be included in their letter of recommendation for you, if your graduate training director or dissertation chair is writing one of your 3 recommendation letters)
6. A letter of certification from your Internship Training Director verifying that you are in **good standing** and that they expect you to **complete internship on time**, in addition to noting the **date of your last day of internship**

APPLICATION EVALUATION

Each set of application materials received by the due date will be reviewed by two members of the selection committee. Independent ratings are based on educational, intervention, and assessment experiences, cover letter, and professional letters of recommendation. The selection criteria focus on all aspects of the application materials, with emphasis placed on background training, experience, and an applicant's clear articulation of training goals and professional aspirations.

After an average score is calculated, the selection committee addresses any significant discrepancies in scores, and determines the cut-off score to participate in the interview process.

We plan to conduct interviews on 2-3 scheduled interview days in mid to late January, based on the number of applications received (dates TBD). Our current plan is to hold all interviews for the 2023-2024 application season via individually scheduled video conference or telephone call. Applicants will be interviewed by two members of the Selection Committee and will be connected via email or video conference to the current fellows who can answer questions about their experiences and to other staff members as needed for specific questions.

*This document may contain links to sites external to Department of Veterans Affairs.
VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the external linked websites.*

Typically, we offer an optional open house with opportunities to meet current interns, fellows, and staff members, as well as participate in a tour of the facility. However, given the pandemic, an in-person open house is not likely to be available this year, and we are currently planning to have a virtual open house. Applicants will be notified of any changes and of the date of the virtual open house.

Following all interviews, the Selection Committee will meet to identify the top candidates and alternates for the two postdoctoral positions. These selections are based on an integration of file and interview ratings, with the entire list of interviewees being reviewed to ensure that all candidates have received fair and equal consideration.

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Program at VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and will abide by all APPIC guidelines regarding fellowship recruitment and notification procedures.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

The VASLCHCS Psychology Service is committed to recruiting and maintaining a diverse psychology staff. As such, the Fellowship Program places a high value on attracting a diverse group of fellows and on creating an environment of respect and inclusion, where fellows feel safe to fully be the diverse, talented humans that they are. The program appreciates the fact that attracting a diverse group of fellows and staff makes our training program, MH Service, and our whole site stronger.

Throughout the training year, the training program provides several learning opportunities and trainings that build upon the diversity competencies fostered in graduate training. The training program schedules a number of specific seminars to directly train fellows in a range of diversity topics. Recent topics have included: skills for talking about race and racism in clinical practice, developing programming for transgender Veterans, ethical and diversity considerations when using telehealth, understanding military culture, LGBTQ allyship/addressing anti-LGBTQ behaviors, and responding to sexism in the workplace, to name just a few. The topics vary year to year, in large part due to the requests of the individual training cohort and their needs as discussed with the training director. Fellows also have the opportunity for involvement in the psychology training program's Multicultural Diversity and Inclusion Committee and/or VASLCHCS's Diversity and Inclusion Committee (with several Special Emphasis Programs). Our aim is to foster not only cultural competence, but also cultural humility in our work with others.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Psychology fellows are Health Professions Trainees (HPTs) in the VA system and are appointed as temporary employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As such, HPTs are subject to laws, policies, and guidelines posted for VA staff members. There are infrequent times in which this guidance can change during a training year which may create new requirements or responsibilities for HPTs. If employment requirements change during the course of a training year, HPTs will be notified of the

change and impact as soon as possible and options provided. The VA Training Director for your profession will provide you with the information you need to understand the requirement and reasons for the requirement in timely manner.

DUE PROCESS:

All trainees are afforded the right to due process in matters of problematic behavior and grievances. Due process documents are a part of the orientation manual and are reviewed during orientation. A copy of our due process policy is available on request.

PRIVACY POLICY:

We collect no personal information from you when you visit our website.

SELF-DISCLOSURE:

We do not require trainees to disclose personal information to their clinical supervisors except in cases where personal issues may be adversely affecting a trainee's performance and such information is necessary to address these difficulties.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER:

The VASLCHCS is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Psychology Service actively supports and is in full compliance with the spirit and principle of Affirmative Action in the recruitment and selection of staff and fellows. We provide equal opportunities in employment and training for all qualified persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disabilities, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. In accordance with federal government employment regulations, only citizens of the United States are eligible for training positions funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

ABOUT SALT LAKE CITY AND UTAH

According to the 2020 census, Salt Lake City has a population of approximately 200,567 with the surrounding metropolitan area having approximately 1.2 million people. Individuals unfamiliar with Salt Lake City and the state of Utah are often quite surprised at the extensive array of indoor and outdoor activities available. Salt Lake City, nestled in the valley between the Wasatch and Oquirrh Mountains, is a montage of modern high-rises, commercial centers, colorful neighborhoods, unique sightseeing attractions, historic sites, excellent restaurants, and beautiful shopping areas. The city is also home to acclaimed ballet dance companies, the Utah Opera Company, the Eccles Theater (for Broadway shows), many fine art galleries, history and art museums, excellent concert venues, and annual film, art, and culinary festivals. Each year in June, the VASLCHCS participates in the city's many PRIDE celebrations. In addition, sports fans can enjoy professional basketball, hockey, and soccer games, semi-pro baseball, and a variety of college sporting events via the University of Utah and Brigham Young University.

For the outdoor recreational enthusiast, Utah is truly a paradise, and Salt Lake City is surrounded by picturesque mountains and canyons. During the winter months, Utah has "The Greatest Snow on Earth." The average snowfall in the mountains near Salt Lake City is 500 inches, and 11 ski resorts are within an

hour drive. During the summer months, Utahans take advantage of over 1,000 lakes, rivers, and streams and over 9,500 miles of hiking trails. Sailing, wind surfing, kayaking, rock climbing, and mountain biking are extremely popular during the warmer months as well. Utah is home to five national parks: Arches National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, and Zion National Park. Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park are within reasonable driving distances as well. Be sure to ask the staff what they love about living in Utah.

TRAINING STAFF

We encourage you to contact staff members if you have any specific questions for them.

D. Aaron Ahern, PhD (he/him)

Training Background: PhD, Clinical/Counseling Psychology, Utah State University

Predoctoral Internship: Huntsman Mental Health Institute, Salt Lake City, UT

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team, VITAL Program Manager

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Working with Student Veterans, Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Processing Therapy, EMDR, Written Exposure, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Outcomes Research/Measurement Based Care, Peer to Peer Interventions for Student Veterans, Utilization of qEEG/Neurofeedback for PTSD Assessment/Treatment and Learning Difficulties

Email: Dennis.Ahern@va.gov

Steve Allen, PhD (he/him)

Training Background: Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, University of Wyoming

Predoctoral Internship: Martinez VA

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team Lead

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Treatment of PTSD and psychological assessment; community outreach and education, including law enforcement and clergy; process oriented group psychotherapy; development of psychology professionals.

E-mail: Steven.Allen@va.gov

Jacek Brewczyński, PhD (he/him)

Training background: PhD, Clinical Psychology, University of Detroit

Predoctoral Internship: Tampa VAMC

Postdoctoral Fellowship: Clinical Psychology, VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team and the Substance Abuse Residential Treatment unit.

Areas of interest/expertise: Psychological interventions for veterans with co-morbid diagnoses of PTSD & SUD; psychological & neuropsychological assessment, including personality assessment; transpersonal interventions, such as mindfulness & meditation-based treatment.

Email: Jacek.Brewczynski@va.gov

Alison Conway, PsyD (she/her)

Training Background: PsyD, Clinical Psychology, Pepperdine University

Predoctoral Internship: VA Loma Linda Healthcare System

Postdoctoral Fellowship: Clinical Psychology, VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team, Warrior Renew Program Coordinator

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Military Sexual Trauma, PTSD and Complex Trauma, Evidence-Based Treatments for PTSD (Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure), Moral Injury, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Equine Therapy/Equine-Assisted Learning.

Email: Alison.Conway@va.gov

Sandy Diaz, LCSW, PsyD (she/her)

Training Background: PsyD, Clinical Community Psychology, University of La Verne; MSW, Arizona State University

Predoctoral Internship: VA Long Beach Healthcare System

Postdoctoral Fellowship: Clinical Psychology, VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team and Dialectical Behavior Therapy Team

Areas of Interest/Expertise: PTSD, coping, emotional dysregulation, valued living, achieving a life worth living, suicide prevention, DBT, STAIR

Email: Sandra.Diaz@va.gov

Tom Mullin, PhD (he/him)

Training Background: PhD, Counseling Psychology, University of Utah

Predoctoral Internship: VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team, Assistant PCT Coordinator

Areas of Interest/Expertise: PTSD, readjustment after OEF/OIF/OND deployment, psychological assessment, evidence-based treatment for PTSD, Prolonged Exposure Consultant, veteran outreach programs

Email: Thomas.Mullin2@va.gov

Jen Romesser, PsyD (she/her)

Training Background: PsyD, Clinical Psychology, Pepperdine University

Predoctoral Internship: SLC VA Healthcare System (2004/2005)

Postdoctoral Fellowship: Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, Downey, California (2005/2006)

Current Position: Clinical Psychologist (Outpatient Mental Health) and the Director of the SLC Network of Dedicated Enrollment Site for the VA Cooperative Studies Program

Areas of Interest/Expertise: rehabilitation neuropsychology, post-traumatic stress disorder, brain injury, chronic pain, clinical trial research

Email: Jennifer.romesser@gmail.com

Renn Sweeney, PhD (she/her)

Training Background: PhD, Clinical Psychology, University of Utah

Predoctoral Internship: VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Current Position: Psychology Training Director; Health Behavior Coordinator

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Integrative healthcare, health and behavior change, brief treatment, stress and coping with chronic illness, tobacco cessation, and insomnia

E-mail: caroline.sweeney@va.gov

Cicely Taravella, PhD (she/her)

Training Background: PhD, Clinical Psychology, University of North Texas

Predoctoral Internship: VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Postdoctoral Fellowship: VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Current Position: PTSD Clinical Team, Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Co-Director

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Processing Therapy, trauma-related guilt, moral injury, secondary traumatic stress/compassion fatigue, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, third wave behaviorism, training/supervision

Email: Cicely.Taravella2@va.gov

PARTING WORDS

Thank you for your interest in our fellowship program, and we wish you the very best during this exciting time. If you have questions about the postdoctoral fellowship or about the Salt Lake City VA please do not hesitate to contact me:

Sincerely,

Cicely C. Taravella, PhD (she/her/hers)
Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Co-
Director
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Salt Lake City, UT 84148
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Cicely.Taravella2@va.gov